1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

by the individual and his immediate family. A father-in-law and son-in-law may assist each other if poor health strikes, but such assistance is limited to gifts of food or casual labor (cutting a little wood, making an occasional trip to the trap line) and never extends to gifts of money. Problems arising from sickness are shouldered as inevitable, but possess considerable self-pity and despair. A sick person is neither neglected by his spouse or parents nor exceptionally well treated. Illness is generally not catered to, and a sick adult or older child, unless he actively resists, is rarely excused from work. There are, therefore, few secondary factors to be derived from illness, although men often use their symptoms as justifications for inactivity or procrastination. In general people do not remain in bed until they are seriously sick. A patient may sit a great deal or, if an old woman, crouch on the ground, but is slow to lie down.

As far as treatment is concerned, any man or woman may assume the role of therapist, a role conferring little status or prestige. Generally a parent ministers to a child, a husband and wife to each other. There is still a residual belief that certain individuals, particularly older men like Rivet Joe, possess supernaturally derived curative powers. This belief, however, serves no important function and such reputed shamans are no longer requested to practice. An incident reported by Old Mike illustrates contemporary attitudes. Five or six years ago Willy Wiley accidentally shot himself through the hand. The boy's father, Old Wiley, refused to consider Old Mike's conclusion to send the boy outside for medical treatment. "Fortune gives heal us," Old Wiley said, referring to the concept of supernatural powers. Old Mike replied: "Fortune not gives help." The lower's opinion prevailed, and Willy was flown to Fort St. John, where the injury was successfully treated. In native theory, medicine is rarely forced upon an unwilling patient and even adolescents are usually permitted to control their own treatment. Thus Old Mike reported that his daughter, Louise, had been prescribed "T. B. medicine" by the Canadian Air Force physician at Watson Lake Airport. The medicine was given to Old Mike with instructions that the girl take it daily. "Doctor tell me, 'Mike her take it'." Nevertheless Old Mike left it up to Louise to treat herself. "I don't think she take it yet," he remarked several months later.[29]

The most important therapy comes from outside the Indian community. Since their way to the area, the Roman Catholic missionaries have dispensed a limited amount of simple medication, and white trappers also from time to time provide free aid and simple consultation for Indians encountered in the bush. During 1944 and the greater part of 1945, highly qualified medical therapy together with limited hospital facilities were available from Canadian and United States Army physicians, doctors, and nurses who were stationed at Watson Lake Airport to serve the air forces. The facilities for such care were readily used by the Indians until they were withdrawn in the fall of 1945. Several times Canadian and United States doctors made confidential visits to Lower Post, where they advised patients who sought them out. In January 1945, an United States Army physician parachuted from a plane near Smith River, to help curb a dysentery outbreak that has already claimed the lives of several children. When his work was done, Indians guided him out of the bush to the Alaska Highway.

[29] Information received during the winter of 1948-49 revealed Louise to be a patient in a hospital for south of the Kaska area.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

should be kept warm in order to promote rapid healing; this care is especially important in women. Nosebleed is often permitted to continue without interference, the victim leaning forward to allow the blood to drop on the ground. Excessive bleeding of this kind may lead to attempts to staunch the flow of blood with a cloth and sometimes the little finger is tied with a string to stop the circulation before it reaches the nose. Balsam pitch, when available, is applied to burns. The treatment of snowblindness consists primarily in avoiding exposure to strong light. In an emergency, broken bones are set by anyone who feels capable of the operation and mobility is later aided with a crutch made of a single pole, shoulder height, on which is nailed a semicircular wooden support for the armpit. One report was obtained about an old man who, paralyzed on one side, was provided with a small "sleigh" with wooden wheels. To this a dog was harnessed and thus the man could move around camp.* Frances Lake Indians sometimes treat swellings and pains in the joints with a charcoal cross drawn over the affected spot. Potent medicine bundles are used for muscle aches and their application may be accompanied by some massage of the painful area. Powers members of the body are dressed with moss, which is gently applied but not rubbed in place. Gums, regarded as the peculiar affliction of men, are cut out at the root with a pocket knife. "Women can't get it," Old man said, referring to cancer. "Maybe because they stay in camp, warm place." In recent years any serious bodily injury, including toothache, has been referred to white medical attention when possible.

Kaska society has formulated no clear and explicit theory of disease. As a result several rogue but not necessarily conflicting versions of the origin and cause of disease circulate among different individuals. Those commenting on his cold, Hero suggested that "wind" must have brought the "cold sick" from "down down," generating down the Liard River. The notion of communicable disease being borne in the air or wind is clearly allied to the notion of the rare transmitted in interpersonal association to which we have already alluded. In referring to the fact that he and his wife had suffered from dysentery during the winter, Billy Bean said that people were "packing" the disease around with them, "just like wind."

Some diseases, especially cold, are believed to result from exposure to wet and cold. Thus Old John Ah Ie had caught a bad cold during his walk home from Old Sam's place in the autumn rain. Intense days of strong wind and flying dust usually provide people to comment on the dust as being injurious to health. The dust caused by dancing on a wooden floor also sometimes complaints from people who on the new dances in this century. Another point of view ascribes disease to external disorders, particularly disorders of the stomach and liver. Louis Moses, in relating the story of his first son's death, said the child had been carried on the back of one of the older girls. He suspected that in the packing one of the baby's ribs had somehow been struck with the result that the liver had become diseased. Death followed in a few days.

Less frequently is the origin of a specific disease ascribed to the agency of a dead person and easily to sorcery. Informants were consistent in denying belief in "bad medicine."* While recognizing that such sorcerer had formerly flourished in the society, today, so-

* The wheel is not designed in Kaska culture.

* Kaska does have sorcery and in distant past even taken form, from surviving Tlingit-derived name-call, "witch-doctor," which appeared in the post-contact society and based until there was the Hungarian, Witch-doctor in Pine Creek Kaska Society (Lake).

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 lahane ND12

759 cording to Nick: "Now people like white man; he don't know." A causal faith in witchcraft may persist among the Nelson Indians. An Old Man somewhat ruefully stated: "Looks like some people still believe in it. I know Nick Long still believes." Following the dysentery epidemic of 1944 in the Nelson Indian district, Old Man and Mary Wiley report: "The people pretty bad yet. They talk about witch." During discussion of the sporadic cases of dysentery occurring in the summer of 1945 one youngsters spoke up and said: "Too much war; too much blood. That brings out sickness. Too rich people killed."

753 Some of these theories of disease are at least partially empirically demonstrable. How-
759 ever, even where empirical beliefs apply, as for instance in connection with cold and tuberculosis, they do not necessarily influence therapeutic or hygienic measures. Isolation of the patient is not practiced in conjunction with these diseases. Little effort is made to prevent wetting or chilling, except in very cold weather, and in fall children spend entire days in wet excursions. Walking long distances in wet brush is avoided however possible, but this precaution is generally more a matter of comfort than of preventive medicine.

753 It is worth pointing out that there is a greater tendency to explain known in empirical terms than to attribute it to supernatural causation. The typical mode of reacting to sickness, however, are to do nothing, use white patent medicines are available, or refer the patient to white medical attention. Although there is a tendency to hold against anxiety and fear by making light of sickness, there can be little question but that is usually intensely anxiety provoking to the patient. Undoubtedly the fear of disease is inherent the inadequate control which the society experiences over disease. It may also be ascribed to the fear of inexperienced, which can be expected to assume serious proportions with an adult is extremely dependent on his own resources to make a living and whose ability is of paramount economic importance.

757 Most of the medical therapy performed by the Indians is with the 1 of patent medi-
278 cines obtained from stores. A high degree of faith is invested in such preservices and several esteemed bottles are often purchased in the fall to be used for what issues appear during the winter. The most commonly used patent medicines include cough remedies, lini-
[277] ments, dysentery remedies, castor oil, stomach tonic, liver pills, foot ice, and Listerine; the latter, however, is largely consumed in lieu of other alcoholic potions. Lozenges for coughs are often purchased and Vicks Vaporub is popular for colds without coughs. Aspirin is not commonly bought. Shamans who are used to "clean the blood" by removing "bad water" from the circulation. Even Jim drank a compound of fruit salts for this purpose.

757 Indigenous medication is limited to the use of a few plants predominate balsam pitch,
929 balsam bark, raspberry bark, and willow bark, as well as inhalation, vapors, and the application of heat.
278

Balsam pitch is firmly believed to be an medicinal properties, but was readily accessible in the river valleys where most of the people's time is spent. In the fall of 1945, while hunting in the Simpson Mountains, Old Man secured some balsam pitchand put a little on his weak eyes. The pain was intense at first but in the morning he found his sight greatly improved. He did not repeat the treatment, as no more balsam was immediately available. Application of balsam pitch is also recommended for sprains and chilblain diseases. The bark of the balsam was boiled in water and drunk is said to be an effective cure for coughs

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

and for pain near the heart. A cup or two of the stems of the raspberry plant boiled in water provides a cathartic. For a skin irritation on the back of her knees, Elsie Lang was advised by her grandmother, Mrs. Man, to apply a poultice made of fresh or dried boiled fireweed. Two handfuls of willow buds boiled with a pint of water for about twenty minutes in a discarded food tin (the buds discolor metal when boiled) make a medicine that will cure cold. Doses should be taken at regular intervals. A willow-like plant, known as "moose brush" and growing along the upper reaches of Dease River, is highly regarded for its medicinal efficacy. The stems of the plant are boiled for several hours and the effusion drunk for chest pain and cough. The solution may also be used for washing sore eyes. Stems are kept for reuse, but are discarded after several boilings. 757 824 278

The inhalation of the fumes of dog urine is a popular remedy for cold. A person watches for a place where dogs urinate and collects the soaked wood or brush to use in creating a smudge. People walk back and forth through the fumes, breathing them. This treatment is also thought to be effective in preventing cold. When Louis Man's baby showed a swollen neck, the father suggested an "old fashioned" remedy. A hot rock, heated in the oven and wrapped in a towel, was applied to the sore area. Exercise is sometimes recommended for therapy. Following a long period of illness from cough and cold, Old Man set out on a five mile walk, planning to fish upon arrival at his destination. "I figger if my blood work, I'm all right." 757 271

CONCLUSIONS

It is not likely that any analysis of Kaska aboriginal culture made with reference to the criteria of adaptive and adjustive efficiency will reward us with greater insight than we have already derived. As a matter of fact, although many of the ideas which we have just discussed may potentially be of great utility in making a living, their value depends upon their behavioral application; to discuss the manner in which the Kaska apply their empirical knowledge, for example, would require repetition of much that we have already said concerning the Indians' style of life. 226

Therefore, in concluding the description of Kaska culture, we shall be content with briefly sketching the structural relationship of a few aspects of aboriginal to technical and social behaviors. The ideal virtues of men and women, for example, are clarified when the industriousness and skill ideally expected of the men are considered alongside the nature of the male's economic routines and their significance for survival. The Indians are aware of the necessity for hard work in the business of getting a living but do not practice as much as they believe. The economic importance of a woman's industriousness is also revealed in the ethical standards, indicating how important feminine labor is seen to be in conjunction with the man's economic role. Despite men's statements that they can live independently, both sexes are closely expected to supplement one another, as they actually do. From another point of view, the relative simplicity and unelaboration of aboriginal material may itself be regarded as functionally related to the primacy of the food quest in the life of the society. Intensive speculation, whether religious or empirical, requires sufficient leisure for at least part of a society plus an intellectual tradition on which to build. Both these conditions are lacking for the people of the Cassiar. Even the sexual life is influenced by the economic pur- 182 [122]

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Frances Lake
Upper Liard
Dease River

755 [783] [754] [784] pointed out that in illness all the wind did not leave the body—this would have caused death. To cure, a shaman blew some of his wind into the patient's body. No recollection of confession was admitted but Field's anecdote above suggests that practice. Sorcery sometimes resulted in death, or was believed to have that power. The avoidance on making snowshoes before snow lay on the ground obtained among the Frances Lake people as it did in the upper Liard Valley.

MEDICINE AND SURGERY

757 It appears that, compared to the magical rites discussed above, relatively less dogmatic attitudes governed the methods of therapy to be described in this section. Some of the techniques to be discussed may even have been supported by an awareness of their empirically verifiable relationship to the desired end.

757 278 *Upper Liard Kaska.* Charcoal rubbed under the eyes prevented snow blindness. To cure the affliction the sore eyes were bathed in infusions of alder or tamarack bark. No help for snow blindness came from the application of spruce gum nor was bleeding ever used for this purpose. Spruce gum helped to treat blisters, while the young flowers of the fireweed boiled in water provided a drink that relieved muscular pains. An unidentified white root (*nagata*), with an odor as penetrating as horse-radish, growing in mountainous country cleared up head congestion resulting from colds. After grinding it and mixing it with grease, a sufferer breathed the root through each nostril in turn. Sweat baths afforded protection from colds. Both sexes took such baths regularly from about the age of ten. Men provided women in the sweat lodge. Bathing in the sulphurous hot springs of the Cassiar possessed no therapeutic value.*

[805] *Dease River Kaska.* People used balsam gum to staunch the flow of blood from a cut 757 wound then bound the wound with dry grass. The same substance applied to the inner 757 corners of each eye relieved snow blindness without bandaging. Snow blindness was 278 caused by small "white bugs" springing from the snow into the victim's eyes. Snow also bothered small black insects (*u'uwatla*?) that had no injurious effects on human beings.* A tourniquet prevented fatal bleeding in case of a severed artery. Animal grease or bacon relieved the pain of burns. Broken bones were set by shamans, the limb being stretched and rightly bound with a layer of grass wrapped around with tanned-skin line. The casing remained in place for several months or until the break healed. Snowshoe "sickness," manifested by aching in the toes and tendons, could be relieved overnight by wrapping and binding the feet with grass. To thaw frozen parts of the body people gently rubbed snow on the affected part. Also the frozen organ might be immersed in extremely cold water. Remedies for toothache were denied. Emetics are probable but their nature could not be recalled precisely. To treat colds, urine in a vessel was heated with a hot pole. The patient then crouched over the liquid, his head covered with a skin, and inhaled the fumes. Presumably human urine is indicated.

* For some contemporary remedies, a few of which, like the inhalation of urine fumes, probably have roots in the aboriginal period, see Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 207.

* "Small black worms" were thought by the Fort Nelson Slave to cause snow blindness. Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 122.